BUILT to ADAPT

How Strategic Resources Are Transforming the ProLogger Program

By Jeanne Harmor, Director of Communications, NCFA

The Forest Education and Conservation Foundation (FECF), the official foundation of the NCFA, supports the advancement of forestry through education, research, technology, and public outreach.

Although the FECF and NCFA are separate entities, their shared mission creates a strong partnership focused on forestry education, communication, and programs that support North Carolina's forest sector.

That partnership became especially important as market consolidation and economic uncertainty placed new pressures on the forestry industry. In response, the NCFA identified a growing need to strengthen the business component of its ProLogger program while preserving its core pillars of safety and environmental responsibility, making outside funding essential.

In 2023, the FECF received a pivotal three-year, $75,000 grant from the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission (NCTTFC). The funding was a turning point for the NCFA's ProLogger program, enabling collaboration with industry partners to develop tools and resources that educate and help protect North Carolina's logging communities.

What Is the NCTTFC?

In 1998, attorneys general from 46 states reached an agreement with four major cigarette manufacturers, known as the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA). Under the MSA, these companies agreed to pay about $206 billion to participating states over the first 25 years, with North Carolina expected to receive roughly $4.6 billion.

The NCTTFC is one of two remaining programs established by the NC General Assembly in 2000 to distribute the state's Phase I funds.

Today, the NCTTFC exists to assist current/former tobacco farmers, former quota holders, persons engaged in tobacco-related businesses, individuals displaced from tobacco-related employment, and tobacco product component businesses in NC that have been affected by the adverse effects of the MSA.

North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission

Learn more about the NCTTFC.

Point of Relevance

You're probably thinking, why would the NCFA, a nonprofit association representing the forestry and forest products industry, apply for a grant representing the tobacco industry?

The NCFA conducted extensive research to better understand how the organization could qualify for this type of funding since forestry does not always operate within the traditional farming sector.

The following points were made in the application to support why the forestry industry is, in fact, a great fit for this funding:

- Forestry is a natural extension of agriculture: like tobacco, timber is a marketable crop rooted in land stewardship, long-term production, and rural enterprise.
- After tobacco reform, many North Carolina farm families needed new ways to sustain their land and income. Forestry became a practical alternative for landowners seeking a stable, long-term agricultural business opportunity.
- USDA Forest Service data shows timberland acreage increased after tobacco reform, suggesting that some land once tied to traditional agriculture shifted toward forestry as families adapted to changing markets.
- Logging and forestry continue to support tobacco-impacted rural communities by providing jobs, preserving working lands, and strengthening local economies.
- North Carolina's forest products sector contributed $41.7 billion to the state economy in 2024, showing that forestry is a major economic driver with broad community impact.

These reasons were enough to capture the NCTTFC's attention, and it was clear that there is, in fact, an undeniable tie between forestry and tobacco farming.

Celebrating the Great News

Once the NCFA team learned that it had been issued a $75,000 grant to use over three years, excitement ensued.

"We were thrilled when we were awarded [the funding]," said NCFA Director of Forestry Programs Mike Powell. "We knew that this level of support would allow us to completely elevate the ProLogger program in innovative ways, making a positive impact for years to come."

Once the funding was issued, the team got to work developing educational resources for the NC logging community, including:

- An annual catalog of video resources to distribute to active ProLoggers, which is now publicly available on the NCFA website *(see page 19)*
- Three in-person workshops on logging cost analysis, led by Drs. Chad Bolding and Joe Conrad of the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources

The Overall Impact

Since this funding has been in motion, current and aspiring ProLoggers have benefited from the resources made possible by this grant. In total, these training videos have reached an estimated

8,400 logging professionals over the course of three years. The NC logging community has and continues to benefit, and the educational videos have been shared with industry partners for widespread consumption.

"Our ProLogger program is the best in the country because we use data to inform the trainings that are needed for our industry," said Powell. "We are intentional in eliciting this input from forestry professionals who serve on several committees, such as NCFA's Safety, Logging, and Transportation Committee, as well as members of the NC Sustainable Forestry Initiative State Implementation Committee, and various industry partners, such as the Carolina Loggers Association and FMIC Insurance Company. This is a collaborative effort to gather feedback in identifying the areas the industry is struggling with so we can determine how to best address the challenges at hand."

This funding allows the ProLogger program to remain committed to its stellar reputation, ensuring this industry-wide designation continues to thrive. Organizations like the NCTTFC and our various industry partners make it possible for us to continue serving our mission at the NCFA, and we are grateful for their collective contributions and support. ■

INTERESTED IN MAKING A CHARITABLE, TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE FECF?
Contact Dr. John Hatcher at jhatcher@ncforestry.org.

VIDEO RESOURCES

Featured ProLogger Video Resources:

Best Business Practices –
Timber Theft Laws

Business of Logging –
Variable Cost and Operator Efficiency

We Are Truckers –
Liability, Exposure, and Safety

The Next Generation –
Workforce Retention and Succession Planning

Business of Logging Part II –
Contracts, Subcontractors, and Business Structure

The Business of Logging Miniseries:

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